

OUTGOING MESSAGE

COMINT

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SENSITIVE

ROUTING	1	4	7	10
	2	5	8	11
	3	6	9	12

RTO: IMMEDIATE WHITE HOUSE//SITUATION ROOM FOR [REDACTED] 25X1D

WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED

ITEM NO: UNI-15 DATE 22 JAN 79

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON SOVIET INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL CAPABILITY

BEN MIDDLETON'S ARTICLE IN THIS MORNING'S NEW YORK TIMES ON THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF REOPENING THE SUEZ CANAL CONTAINS A NUMBER OF INACCURACIES AND MUCH HYPERBOLE IN REPORTING THAT SOME SENIOR OFFICERS IN THE US AND UK NAVIES BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL QUICKLY GAIN NAVAL SUPERIORITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. MIDDLETON'S SOURCES ARRIVE AT THEIR CONCLUSION BY PROJECTING A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN SOVIET FORCES IN THE AREA RESULTING FROM THE OPENING OF THE CANAL. AN INCREASE ON THE ORDER OF THE ONE THESE SOURCES PROJECT, HOWEVER, WOULD REQUIRE A MAJOR CHANGE IN SOVIET NAVAL PRIORITIES.

THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS WITH THE DATA AND CONCLUSIONS OF THIS ARTICLE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. --WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE SOVIET NAVY WILL DEPLOY ITS SURVIL-

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CLASS (CALLED KIEV IN THE ARTICLE) AIRCRAFT CARRIER, WHICH WILL BE USED FOR ANTISUBMARINE WARFARE PURPOSES, TO THE INDIAN OCEAN ON A ROUTINE BASIS. DESPITE THE FACT THAT SOVIET NAVAL PUBLICATIONS ASSERT US BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINES HAVE DEPLOYED TO THE INDIAN OCEAN, WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS KNOW THE US DOES NOT SEND POLARIS SUBMARINES THERE. THE FIRST KURIL, MOREOVER, IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND MAY NOT BE OPERATIONAL BEFORE 1976.

--THE SOVIETS DO NOT "MAINTAIN A SQUADRON OF MEDIUM RANGE BOMBERS, USUALLY TU-22S, IN IRAQ." THE MEDIUM RANGE BOMBERS--TU-22SM AND TU-22S--IN IRAQ ARE BELIEVED TO BE IRAQI AND NOT UNDER SOVIET CONTROL.

--CURRENT SOVIET RATES OF NAVAL CONSTRUCTION AND SHIP AVAILABILITY WOULD NOT ALLOW AN INCREASE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN SQUADRON TO THE SIZE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON.

4 --THE ARTICLE IMPLIES THAT SOVIET NAVAL SHIPS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN ARE USUALLY NEWER AND MORE CAPABLE THAN THE US VESSELS THERE. PALTHOUGH THE SPECIFIC FACTS CITED BY MIDDLETON TO SUPPORT THIS INFERENCE ARE NOT UNTRUE, THEY ARE INCOMPLETE AND TEND TO MINIMIZE,

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SIX NAVAL CAPABILITIES. E2 IMPDET-A

SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION: NIO [REDACTED] OSR DIV 25X1A

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